

SAINT TERESA

(1515-1582)

BY

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INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY
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ST TERESA was born in Avila, in the kingdom of Spain, March 28, 1515, and baptized in the Church of St. John Baptist, April 4th, Wednesday in Holy Week. On that day Mass was said for the first time in the Monastery of the Incarnation of the Order of Carmel, where she spent so many years of her life as one of the religious of that house.

Her father, Don Alfonso Sanchez de Cepeda, of an old and honorable race, was twice married and twice widowed. His first wife was Doña Catalina del Peso y Henao, by whom he had three children, one girl and two boys. His second wife, Doña Beatriz Davila y Ahumada, was the mother of nine children, seven boys and two girls. The elder of the two daughters, and the third child of the marriage, was St. Teresa, known for many years of her life as Doña Teresa Sanchez Cepeda Davila y Ahumada.

Don Alfonso was a man of solid piety, most charitable to the poor and the sick, very gentle and considerate with his servants. Doña Beatriz also took all pains to bring up her children in the fear and love of God, devout to our Lady and the saints, and thus laid the foundations of the spiritual life of her daughter, who, before she was seven years old, would give alms out of the little money she had, and contrive to be alone that she might say her prayers, especially the Rosary. St. Teresa in playing with the other children would delight in imitating religious, and she tells us that she believed she wished to be a nun, but yet not so much as she wished to be a hermit or a martyr.

She and one of her elder brothers read lives of saints together. When she read of martyrdom it struck her that

this was a very small price to pay for the vision of God, and discussed with her brother how they could obtain it. The two children agreed that they must go to Africa, where the Moors would behead them because they were Christians. They resolved to execute their purpose, meaning to beg as they went, and so they left their father's house by stealth. They had got as far as the gates of the city when they were met by one of their uncles, who took them home, to the great relief of their mother, who was sending the servants into the streets of the city in search of her missing children.

Disappointed in their hopes of martyrdom, the two children resolved on leaving the world and making themselves hermits in their father's garden. They collected stones to build their cells, but their inexperience defeated them; the stones fell down from the walls they raised, and they knew not how to make them firm. St. Teresa was barely seven years of age when she did this, and she was perfectly serious in her childish way.

Her mother, always in delicate health, died towards the end of the year 1528 or in the beginning of the next, to the great sorrow of the Saint, who in her trouble went to the Church of our Lady of Charity in the hospital of the city, where strangers and pilgrims were lodged. There before her image she implored our Lady with tears to be to her a mother. Her prayer was heard, and she relates that in all her trials she was always succored whenever she called upon that compassionate mother.

Early in 1531 her eldest sister married; in her too she had another most tender and loving mother, who watched over her with a jealous eye, and in whom she could detect nothing but goodness. On the departure of the sister for the country where her husband lived, Don Alfonso took the Saint to the monastery of the Augustinian nuns, who had a school for persons of her age and condition, for she was too young to be left at home as mistress of her father's house. She, however, always accusing herself, says that the reason why her father sent her from home was her own giddiness and vanity. She had become fond of dress, she says, took pains with her hands and her hair, made use of perfumes,

and was very fastidious about her person. There were also some cousins who frequented the house, and who could not well be refused admittance, though Don Alfonso much regretted their presence. With one of these the Saint was too familiar, as she says, and too fond of listening to her stories of her follies. Teresa was also fond of reading, and continued so all her life, but at this time she spent much time in reading the romances of the day—tales of chivalry. This habit she had acquired under her mother, who used to amuse herself with these books in order to forget, if she could the great bodily pains to which she was subject. All this, however, was kept secret, and Don Alfonso knew nothing of it.

The Saint was very much distressed when taken to the monastery, regarding her removal from home as a punishment, and for about a week suffered much—more, however, on account of a suspicion she had that her vanity was known than from her seclusion in the convent. She went to confession as soon as she could, and she was more contented than she would have been at home. All the nuns were pleased with her, for our Lord, she tells us, had given her the grace to please everybody. And indeed it is known that she was a most winning and charming woman.

She was most open with her confessors; and now in the convent having told all about herself she was consoled by hearing that in all those things which she calls her vanities she had not sinned. She became fond of a religious, Doña Maria Brizeño, who slept in the dormitory of the seculars, and took great delight in her conversation. Doña Maria, a person of great sanctity, whose conversation was such as became her state, made a great impression on the Saint, and removed from her mind in some measure the dislike she had to be a nun. "If I saw any one weep in prayer I envied her, for my heart was now so hard that I could not shed a tear if I read the Passion through." She said many prayers, and used to ask the nuns to pray for her that she might

learn how she was to serve God; but she did wish not to be a nun and that God would not call her to religion; at the same time she was afraid of marriage. She remained in the monastery a year and a half, but towards the end she had a great inclination towards the religious life; not, however, in that house. She had a friend, Doña Juana Saurez, in the monastery of the Incarnation, and that determined her to be a nun, if a nun she must be, of the Order of Carmel. These good thoughts vanished, and she says that afterwards she could not persuade herself to become a nun.

She had a serious illness and was taken home. On her recovery it was settled that she should go to her married sister in the country. She stopped on the way at the house of Don Pedro, her father's brother, who detained her for some days. He was a widower, and spent all his time in devotion, and at last, giving up all his possessions, became a friar. He made the Saint read to him; and though she did not like his books she appeared as if she did, for she would always sacrifice her own pleasure for that of others. The conversation of her uncle made an impression upon her, and she understood the truth she had heard as a child that all things are nothing and the world vanity. "I also began to be afraid," she says, "that if I were then to die I should go down to hell." She could not, however, bend her will to become a religious, though she saw it was the best and safest course. Nevertheless by degrees she did violence to herself, and determined to give herself to God.

This struggle with herself lasted three months, but she does not seem to have communicated her trouble to any one. Teresa trod the wine-press alone, and would say to herself, when she thought of her own delicate nurture, her poor health, the fainting fits to which she was now subject, that she could not endure the hardships of the religious life; and then would answer herself that the sufferings of a nun cannot be greater than the pains of purgatory, that she deserved to be in hell, and that it would not be much to

spend the rest of her life in purgatory and win heaven. During those months of her inward trials she became fond of reading good books, which helped her very much, especially the epistles of St. Jerome. At last she told her father of the resolution to be a nun. Don Alfonso was a good man, but his love of his child prevailed; and she had more of his love than any of his children. He refused his consent, and neither the prayers of his child nor the entreaties of others could move him. He was as resolute in refusing as she was resolute in going. All she could get from him was that she might do as she pleased after his death. The Saint saw the danger of delay, and made up her mind to execute her purpose at whatever cost.

While preparing herself to obey the call of God, Teresa persuaded one of her brothers to become a friar. The brother and sister laid their plans, and early one morning secretly left their father's house—he for the Dominican house in Avila, she for the Monastery of the Incarnation where her friend Doña Juana Suarez was a religious. “I remember perfectly well,” she wrote afterwards, “and it is quite true, that the pain I felt when I left my father's house was so great that I do not believe the pain of dying will be greater; it seemed as if all the bones in my body were wrenched asunder.” This was on November 2, 1533, the feast of All Souls.

She went to that monastery because she wished to be with her friend, but would have gone to any other if she could have served God more faithfully in it, or to any convent that her father preferred. God led her by her natural affection for that nun, while she was trampling on a greater natural affection—her love of her father. The nuns received her, but at the same time sent word to Don Alfonso. The father hurried to the monastery, but he returned home without his child; God changed his heart, and he made the sacrifice demanded of him.

The novitiate seems to have been a cross. "I suffered much uneasiness," she says, "about things in themselves of no importance, was found fault with very often when I was blameless. I bore it painfully and with imperfection. However, I went through it all because of the joy I had in being a nun. When they saw me seeking to be alone, and even weeping over my sins at times, they thought I was discontented, and said so." She confesses, too, that she was vain in some things: she did not know how to use the Breviary or how to behave in choir; she knew the other novices could have taught her, but "I never asked them," she says, "that they might not know how little I knew." She says her singing was bad, that she made mistakes and was ashamed of doing so in the presence of the nuns. But at last she asked to be instructed in her part before she entered the choir; it was a pain to her at first, and then it became a pleasure to do so. When she became indifferent about her good singing she sang much better, and she was never vexed at its being known in the monastery that her singing was not good.

She conquered herself in another way: she had been brought up delicately, as became her state, but now she made an effort to overcome her fastidiousness. There was a nun ill in the house of a very loathsome disorder, and the nuns were afraid of it. Teresa, admiring the patience of the sick sister, became her nurse, and prayed to have the like patience whatever illness might befall her. God heard her prayer, and in less than two years she was stricken down and to all appearance beyond the reach of human help.

But before this came to pass she made her profession, at the end of her year of novitiate. When the time had come she had to do violence to herself again: the tempter made another effort to keep her in the world, as if he knew the great things she was to do. Teresa fought the battle alone, confiding her trouble to no one, and no one saw any sign

of the inward tumult. She made her profession, and was filled with a great joy which she never lost.

This joy had now to be tempered with bodily illness of no common kind—a disease of the heart accompanied with pains so sharp at times as to deprive her of consciousness. The physicians of Avila had no remedies for it, and her father took her out of the monastery that she might be put under the care of a woman in Bezadas, who had a name for the treating of infirmities like those of the Saint. As the monastery was not enclosed, her friend Doña Juana was allowed to accompany her. They went first to their uncle's house; then to her sister's, where she spent the winter. There the Saint read a book called *Tercer Abecedario*, which treats of prayer, and resolved to follow the way of prayer described in it. She had now the gift of tears, and found pleasure in reading, loved to be alone, and went often to confession; but she had no one who would teach her how to make her prayer. Teresa made great progress notwithstanding, but she did not know it, nor did she understand her own state. "I spent," she says, "nearly nine months in the practice of solitude," and all this while our Lord Himself was her teacher. "He raised me," she says, "to the prayer of quiet, and now and then to that of union, though I understood not what either the one or the other was, nor the great esteem I ought to have had of them."

In April, 1536, she went to Bezadas, but the rough treatment made her worse, and the three months of her stay there brought her almost to death's door. The pain at the heart was so sharp and unendurable that those about her feared it might end in madness. She loathed all food, and could do not more than drink that which they gave her: her bodily weakness was extreme, and with it all she was overwhelmed in great sadness.

But God gave her patience, she bore all her sufferings without a murmur, remembering the history of Job, and his resignation to the will of God. They brought her home to

Avila in a state worse than that in which she had left it. In August, when the feast of our Lady was at hand, Teresa asked for her confessor. Her father thought that she was afraid she was going to die and would not listen, hoping thereby to quiet her. "That very night," she says, "my sickness became so sharp that I remained insensible for nearly four days." She had the last Sacraments, and was expected to die every moment. Her father was inconsolable now, because he had kept her from confession.

They dug her grave in the monastery, and the Carmelite fathers sung the *Requiem* for her; for all believed that she must be dead. She recovered, however, and insisted on going to confession at once. Of that confession she says that it was of all her faults, "for this grace among others did our Lord bestow on me, that ever since my first Communion I never failed to confess everything which I thought was wrong, even if it were only a venial sin."

But she was still so ill that she could not swallow even a drop of water; she was bent, as she says, "like a coil of ropes," unable to move any part of her body except one finger of her right hand. She could not bear to be touched, and they had to move her in a sheet. Even in this state Teresa would return to her monastery; and she did so in a most pitiable condition, which lasted more than eight months. She was paralyzed for about three years, and praised God when she was able to crawl on hands and knees; that she regarded as nothing compared with the tortures she had undergone, and was content to remain in that state if that was the will of God.

Her longing for solitude, that she might give herself to prayer, made her wish for health; in the infirmary solitude was impossible. But she was not idle; she observed such exact measure of her words as to keep herself and those with whom she conversed from all detraction, and it was understood in the monastery that when she was present, absent persons were safe. She confessed and communica-

ted more frequently, read much, but very often did not venture to pray, on account of the bitter anguish which came upon her because she had offended God. She was also kept from prayer because she did not see much improvement in herself, though she made good resolutions. Even her tears and contrition made her angry with herself.

Teresa had a great devotion to St. Joseph. The physicians of this world, she says, had failed her, and so she went to those of heaven. She had Masses said and prayers made for her: her wish for health prevailed, and St. Joseph healed her; he "my lord and father," she writes, "delivered me and rendered me greater services than I knew how to ask for."

She tells us that having recovered her health she began to forget the practices of her earlier days. She had to frequent the parlors of the monastery, and in many ways had as much freedom allowed her as the older nuns; but she confesses that she never abused it. She had many friends, and was so winning in her ways that people eagerly sought her. One day while with a friend—it was at the beginning of her acquaintance with her—our Lord stood before her, "stern and grave" and made her see that her conduct displeased Him. "I saw Him," she says, "with the eyes of the soul more distinctly than I could have seen Him with the eyes of the body," and she resolved never to meet that person again. Satan, however prevailed; she was made to think it was an imagination, yielded to the temptation, and returned to her new friend. She was told there was no harm in seeing her, and that she gained instead of losing reputation by so doing. On another occasion in the parlor with that person, a great toad crawled towards them in their sight and in the sight of others who were there. She recognized this to be another warning, but no one told her she was in the wrong except one of the nuns, then old, and a relative of the Saint. But even this did not restrain her—she frequented the parlor as before.

Teresa had now given up mental prayer, though in the beginning of her illness she had helped others to pray, and among them was her own father, whom she brought to adopt the practice of mental prayer. He made great progress in it, and that delighted the Saint. He came often to the monastery, for he found great comfort in speaking of the things of God. This was another torture to his daughter, who for a year and more gave up the practice, thinking it an act of great humility to abstain. She was always honest, so she told her father that she did not pray; she alleged her health as her excuse, and that she could do no more than pray with the community. He believed her, but was sorry for her, for he had found the treasure of prayer himself. He came to the monastery as usual, and having seen his daughter, would quickly go away, saying that he was wasting his time.

Though Teresa gave up her practice of mental prayer, she intended to resume it; she "was waiting to be very free from sin first," yet she was unable to mention a single mortal sin, and during the whole of this time her confessors found no fault with her. This false humility was about to be corrected, for her father fell ill, and she, not being bound to enclosure, had leave to nurse him in his sickness, which was his last. He died as he lived, to the great joy of the Saint, who nevertheless felt acutely her loss, for he was to her all the comfort and good of her life, and she his most cherished child. Her father's confessor was the Dominican friar, Father Vicente Baron, and to him she made her confession, giving him at the same time an account of her whole life, and of her mental prayer which she had abandoned. The Father charged her to resume her prayer, never to omit it, and to go to Communion once a fortnight. Obedient to his directions, her life became a burden, because she learnt in prayer more and more her faults; she took delight in the things of God, but she frequented the parlor, and tried to reconcile the life of the spirit with that of sense.

She persevered in prayer; and God rewarded her so abundantly, that she, looking upon herself as a great sinner, felt these graces of God as a "fearful kind of torment." She dreaded the time for prayer, for she knew no penance she would not have more willingly endured than going to her oratory to pray.

God visited Teresa in visions and revelations, and she, still thinking herself to be a most miserable sinner, began to be afraid of delusions. She saw that these visitations of God were inconsistent with her way of life, though she was laboring to mend it. She was raised to "the prayer of quiet and very often to that of union which lasted some time;" but her fears grew. She had no one to help her; and yet God Himself was directing her the whole time. She heard of some priests who would help her—the Fathers of the Society had come to Avila—but she "did not think herself fit to speak to them."

Teresa had heard of a learned priest in the city, greatly respected for his saintly life; she resolved to consult him, and contrived to do so, with the help of Don Francis de Salcedo, his friend, and a friend of her and her family. Don Francis, like his wife, was a man of prayer; after her death he became a priest, and was chaplain and confessor of the Carmelites of St. Joseph's which the Saint had founded. For twenty years of his married life he attended the theological lectures of the Dominicans in Avila. He brought that priest, Gaspar Daza, to the Monastery of the Incarnation, and the Saint made known to him the state of her soul and her way of prayer, but he would not hear her confession. However, he gave her strong counsel; but the Saint confesses that she could not have made any progress under his direction, although he had a special grace and gift for the conduct of beginners.

She was disappointed in this, but afterwards saw in the failure of Gaspar Daza that it was a grace of God "that I might know," she says, "and converse with persons so holy

as the members of the Society of Jesus." But she was still afraid of them, and made Don Francis, the layman, her director; he helped her to overcome her imperfections by sound counsel and by the story of his own difficulties and weaknesses. She improved under his direction, but Don Francis became afraid when she told him of the great graces she received in prayer. He, being led by a different road could not understand it, and told her that he was afraid she was under delusions. He asked her to explain to him her way of prayer: she replied that she could not, because she did not understand it herself. She was now greatly distressed, and wept over her misery.

Teresa looked into certain books treating of prayer; she found in one of them a description of her way of prayer, and showed it to Don Francis, who took the book to Gaspar Daza that they might consider it together. They considered the matter, and came to the conclusion that the Saint was deceived by Satan. Don Francis in great distress went to her with the information, which she received with great fear and dread. While they were considering this matter, she had prayed earnestly, and had asked others to pray, that she might be delivered from her anxiety. This was the result: she was told that she was deluded, and that she had better make a general confession to Father Juan de Padranos of the Society of Jesus, and observe with the utmost faithfulness the counsel he would give her.

She wept, but obeyed at once, and began to prepare for her general confession. The Father came and understood her state; it was the work of the Holy Ghost, he said, but she must make her prayer more systematically, because the foundation of it had not been properly laid. She was to force herself to make her prayer, and mortify herself, because the graces which God had given her were so singular. It might be the will of God to do great things by her. She was to meditate daily on the Passion, and resist the extra-

ordinary effects of her prayer till he gave her leave to yield to them.

Teresa was now in great peace, obedient to the new direction and resolved to advance by self-denial and careful observance of all her duties, to practice greater poverty by cutting off all superfluities. She disciplined herself even unto blood, praying earnestly that our Lord would keep her from falling again into her former ways.

At this time the Duke of Gandia, then Father Francis Borgia, of the Society, came to Avila. Her confessor and Don Francis del Salcedo brought him to the Monastery of the Incarnation, that he might examine the spirit of the Saint. He heard her, and said that her state was the work of the Holy Ghost; she was not to resist the sweetness and joy of her prayers as she had done for two months. This was a relief to her, and Don Francis himself was convinced that the Saint was not deluded.

Father Juan de Padranos was removed from Avila, and the Saint was in trouble again, not knowing how to find a confessor. One of her kinswomen obtained leave for her to come to her house, where she made the acquaintance of a lady given to prayer, Doña Guiomar de Ulloa, who took her to Father Baltasar Alvarez. "He began," says Teresa, "by putting me in the way of perfection." He insisted on her giving up certain friendships which were harmless, though she admits there was too much natural affection in them. She resisted at first, and asked him if she must be ungrateful. He replied that she was to lay the matter before God, and recite the *Veni Creator*. Then she, having prayed for some time, began the hymn, and while saying it fell into an ecstasy. This was her first, and in it she heard the words, "I will have thee converse not with men, but with angels." She was afraid at first, but was comforted at the same time. From that day forth, she says, "I have never been able to form friendship with, nor have any comfort in, nor any particular affection for, any per-

son whatever except those who, as I believe, love God and strive to serve Him." She gave up her friendships without pain either to herself or to her friends: they were even edified.

Now our Lord laid upon her one of the heaviest of crosses—the opposition of good people. The great work of our Lord in the soul of the Saint could not be hid, and those whom she had consulted did not all of them keep her secret. It became known that she had visions and revelations, and was unlike other devout persons in Avila. At this time her heart was pierced by the lance of the angel; and she made the vow of the highest perfection in all her actions. She had the consolation of learning from St. Peter of Alcantara that he approved of it and of all her ways.

Father Alvarez was now absent from Avila, and her confessor convinced himself, or seemed to do so, that her visions were illusions of Satan. He ordered Teresa to make the sign of the Cross when she had a vision, to point her finger at it in scorn, and be firmly persuaded of its diabolic nature. This was very hard, for the Saint had no doubt about the visions; they were her treasure. She had defended herself as well as she could against the objections of those who knew of them, and had allowed them to say all they pleased without contradicting them; and they charged her with want of humility. This last counsel of the confessor distressed her beyond measure: but she obeyed, though it was most painful to her to make the sign of the Cross whenever she saw our Lord: "If they had cut me in pieces," she says, "I could not believe it was Satan." She held a crucifix constantly in her hand that she might not be continually making the sign of the Cross, and as for making signs of contempt she could not do so: it reminded her of the insults of the Jews. At last our Lord consoled her, saying that she had done well to obey, and that He would make them understand the truth of the matter. Even her confessors proved a source of trouble to her, though Father

Alvarez always consoled her, even when he was compelled to be hard with her. God had raised her to a high degree of prayer, but had not given her the knowledge of it, nor the ability to describe it: that is her own account. Then, when she was called upon by those who examined her spirit to explain herself, she could do nothing but repeat over and over again the same thing. At a later time God enabled her to speak, and she has spoken as no one had spoken before, so fully and so clearly.

Of herself, thus writes Teresa when she had been forty years in religion: "She occasionally heard interior locutions, had visions and revelations interiorly. She saw with the eyes of the soul, for she never saw anything with her bodily eyes, nor heard anything with her bodily ears: twice she thinks, she heard a voice, but she understood not that which was spoken. It was a sort of making things present when she saw these things interiorly; they passed away like a meteor most frequently. The vision, however, remained so impressed on her mind, and produced such effects, that it was as if she saw those things with her bodily eyes and more."

When told that her visions were the work of an evil spirit, Teresa replied that it could not be, for Satan would not do anything to help to correct her faults. Father Alvarez defended her always, but was often over-ruled by those whom the Saint had been made to consult. Being very humble, he distrusted himself, and that occasioned trouble, for the others were very confident and remonstrated with him. When they were agreed that the visions of the Saint were the work of Satan, he told her to keep nothing hidden from him, and then if all her visions were the work of the devil she would come to no harm, for God would bring good out of evil. She obeyed him in everything, and for three years he had as much to suffer as she had. At last God made known to him the truth, and "I be-

lieve," says the Saint, "that he received this light from the Blessed Sacrament."

From first to last these trials of her spirit lasted six years; the more they tried her, the more she fell into a trance. Many prayers were made and many Masses were said that our Lord would "lead her by another way." But it was not the will of God; He had a great work for her to do, and He prepared her and directed her Himself through the furnace of that which was in reality the persecution or contradiction of good men, which is one of the greatest trials of saints.

There were nearly two hundred nuns in the Monastery of the Incarnation, and the Saint longed for a solitary life. She was subject to visits within the monastery, and moreover her friends obtained leave for her to visit them at their houses. She was weary of this: and one day in her cell with others like minded, her niece, Maria de Ocampo, brought up under her care, said, in the midst of a conversation about a more retired life, that she would give a thousand ducats to build them a house, if they wished to be like the barefooted orders. Maria was young, not at all given to austerities, but very fond of dress. No sooner had she thus spoken than she had a vision of our Lord. Her offer was accepted, and she herself afterwards was among the early novices of the new Carmel, and later on Prioress of Valladolid.

The Saint communicated her desires and the offer of her niece to Doña Guiomar, who began at once to consider how to find a revenue for the new house. The Saint, however, was not over eager now; she had become fond of her monastery and of her cell, and could not leave them.

One day after Communion our Lord bade her found the house, and made her great promises: He would delight in it; it should be called the house of St. Joseph; though the religious orders were then relaxed she was not to think that He was scantily served in them—for what would be-

come of the world if there were no religious in it? She was to tell her confessor all this, and that He asked him not to thwart her in the matter.

Teresa gave an account in writing of this to her confessor, who could not order her to abandon her purpose, though he saw no means of accomplishing it. He bade her tell her superior, the Provincial of the Order, and act according to his direction. She never spoke of her visions to the Provincial, who was told of the plan by Doña Guiomar. He was pleased, gave Doña Guiomar all the help he could, promising to accept the new covenant. She wrote also to St. Peter of Alcantara, who approved of the whole proceeding.

Instantly a violent persecution befell the Saint: "sharp sayings and keen jests." People said it was folly; everybody was against her. Doña Guiomar was even refused absolution because she would not abandon the Saint, and was told she was bound to remove the scandal she had given.

Doña Guiomar laid the matter before a holy Dominican, Father Pedro Ibañez; the Saint also went to him, but never said a word about any revelation, confining herself wholly to ordinary reasons, for she would have his opinion without respect to visions and revelations. "He asked us to give him eight days before he answered, and also if we had made up our minds to abide by what he might say." "I said we had," was the answer of the Saint, "but though I said so, and though I thought so, I never lost a certain confidence that the monastery would be founded. My friend had more faith than I: nothing they could say would make her give it up."

Father Pedro told them afterwards that he had at first made up his mind against the foundation; he heard of the cry against the Saint, and was warned to be cautious. But when he began to consider his decision he was changed; he recognized the hand of God, and not only bade the

Saint go on, but told her further how she was to accomplish her end, and to send to him any one who objected, and he would answer him. The Saint being now reassured and her friend consoled, a house was bought, and the deeds of purchase were prepared; but the day before the papers were to be signed the Provincial declined to acknowledge the house, moved thereunto by the opposition of the nuns in the Monastery of the Incarnation.

People were now more certain than before that the Saint was doing a foolish thing, and hard words became more common. "I was now very much disliked throughout the whole monastery, because I wished to found another of stricter observance. It was said I insulted my sisters; that I could serve God among them as well as elsewhere, for there were many among them much better than I; that I did not love the house, and that it would have been better if I had procured greater resources for it instead of founding another. Some said I ought to be put in prison; others, but they were not many, defended me in some degree."

Notwithstanding all this she was very happy; she submitted joyfully to the will of God, for she had done all she could to fulfil His command; but she was unable to give up her conviction that the work would be done. Another trouble now befell her from an unexpected source. She received a letter from her confessor which seemed to charge her with disobedience. She was bid to acknowledge that all she had been doing was folly, and to abstain from her purpose because of the scandal she had caused. She humbled herself and set about examining her conscience; perhaps her visions were illusions and herself deceived. Her affliction was very great, but our Lord came to her relief: He bade her not to distress herself; she had pleased Him greatly, and not sinned in the whole affair. This so consoled her that she regarded the persecution she had suffered as nothing.

At this time God visited her in prayer in a more wonder-

ful way—in violent impetuosities of divine love and more marvellous trances. She never spoke of the work herself, because of the commandment of her confessor, but the Dominican father was not bound to silence. He, being convinced that the new monastery was for the glory of God, communicated with Doña Guimar; both of them wrote to Rome, and made what preparations they could for the foundation.

It was now bruited abroad that the Saint had had a revelation, so her friends came to her in great fear, saying that the times were dangerous and that she might be taken before the Inquisitors. She laughed, for she was never afraid of them, and offered to go herself before the judges, being conscious that she would not break even the least ceremony of the Church. She gave an account of all her visions and revelations to the Dominican; he said there was nothing to be afraid of.

Teresa remained quiet for five or six months “neither thinking nor speaking of the matter,” but not free from trouble, thinking her confessor, Father Alvarez, did not trust her. Then one day our Lord said to her, “Be not troubled this suffering will soon be over.” She was gladdened by the words because she thought that her death was nigh. She was very happy whenever those words came to her remembrance. That, however, was not the relief promised by our Lord: this was the arrival in Avila of the new rector of the Society, Father Gaspar de Salazar, to whom, at the request of Father Alvarez, she made known her state. She used to feel the greatest repugnance to speak of the graces God bestowed upon her, but now “when I went to the confessional,” she tells us, “I felt in my soul something, I know not what, I do not remember to have felt so either before or after towards any one. I cannot tell what it was, nor do I know of anything with which I could compare it. It was a spiritual joy, and a conviction in my soul that his soul must understand mine, that it was

in unison with it, and yet, as I have said, I knew not how." She knew nothing of the rector, had never spoken to him before, and now found in him the guide she needed, and the direction fitted for her state. Father de Salazar spoke to Father Alvarez and told him to console the saint, and not to direct her along a road so narrow, but to leave the operations of the Spirit alone.

Shortly after this our Lord began to urge the foundation of the new monastery, and bade the Saint lay the matter before the rector and her confessor. She was further required to tell Father Alvarez to make a meditation on Ps. xci. 6—*Quam magnificata sunt opera Tua*. Father Alvarez did so, and from that day forth he never opposed the Saint's work.

The foundation of the monastery was now resumed in secret. But the Saint would do nothing against obedience, knowing, however, that if she spoke to her superiors in the Order all would be lost again as it was before. She asked her brother-in-law, Juan de Ovalle, to take a house in Avila. He consented. The house was bought for the Saint, with money furnished by two ladies who intended to become nuns, and with money sent her by her brother Lorenzo in India. The Saint never expected it, and her brother knew nothing of her affair. When her brother and sister had come to Avila she had leave to visit them, and was thus enabled to direct the workmen who were to make the house a monastery, without exciting suspicion. Somehow or other suspicion was aroused, and one day when the Saint and her sister went to hear the sermon in the Dominican church, the preacher broke out in violent reproaches against those who had visions and revelations. It was impossible to mistake his meaning, which could hardly have been better expressed if he had uttered the name of St. Teresa. The Saint heard it without being in the least disturbed, but her sister was less patient, and took

her out of the church back to the Monastery of the Incarnation.

She was arranging the house in her poverty, for she had no money, and Doña Guiomar was in the same straits: once, having no money to pay the workmen, St. Joseph appeared and bade her employ them. She did so, and the money came. She was told by our Lord that it was not expedient then to place the new monastery under the jurisdiction of the Order, and that she "must send to Rome in a certain way, which He also explained; He would take care that I found help there; and so I did," she says: "I sent to Rome as our Lord directed me, for we should never have succeeded otherwise, and most favorable was the result."

She returned to her brother-in-law, for her presence was necessary. One day, while her nephew, her sister's son, was amusing himself among the materials amassed for the building, a piece of wall badly built fell upon and killed him. Nobody was by, and the child lay dead for some hours. His father was absent, and on his return found his child lifeless among the ruins. He lifted up the body and carried it straight to the Saint's room, laid it down before her, and went out without saying a word. Meanwhile the mother, observing the gloom that had overspread the house, and the silence of the servants, suspected some great calamity, and, with loud cries and tears, rushed into her sister's room. The Saint made her a sign to be silent. She then took the child into her arms and covered him with her veil. No one heard her utter a word, but very soon the child began to caress his aunt, who at once gave him to his mother and bade her kiss him. The child was not only alive, but without a sign of having been hurt. He was very fond of his aunt, and used to say to her that she was bound to see after his salvation, for he had been so near to the vision of God, but she had called him back. He survived her three years.

Don Juan de Ovalle had been in Avila since August 10, 1561, and towards the end of the year the difficulty of keeping the secret was becoming greater and greater. On the night of Christmas Day the Saint received an order from the Provincial to go with one of the sisters to Toledo, for the consolation of Doña Luisa de la Cerda, who was in great distress on account of her husband's death. Doña Luisa had heard much of the Saint and of her great gifts, and, being a friend of the Provincial, obtained the order without difficulty. The Saint was troubled, "because," as she says, "they thought there was some good in me, I knowing myself to be so wicked, could not bear it." Thus it always was with her; she never saw herself as others saw her.

She set out immediately for Toledo with one of the nuns, and her presence was of the greatest service to Doña Luisa, who conceived a great affection for her, which she returned. She had been required by Father Pedro Ibañez to write for him an account of her whole life, and now in the house of Doña Luisa she finished that which she had begun in the Monastery of the Incarnation.

In Toledo she was visited by Maria of Jesus, who had been a novice in the Carmelite Monastery of Granada, and, during her novitiate, had revelations about a reform of the Order. "Our Lord had moved her," says the Saint, "in the same year that He had moved me, to found another monastery of the Order: and as He had given her this desire she sold all she possessed and went to Rome to obtain the necessary faculties. She went on foot and barefooted," with two others of the Order of St. Francis. Pius IV. heard her petition, and then looking at her bleeding feet said, "Woman of strong courage, let it be as thou desirest." She returned to Granada, but the Carmelites and the town council would not allow her to found a house in the city; some even threatened to have her publicly whipped. It was from her that the Saint learnt that the

old Carmelite rule enjoined absolute poverty. Not knowing this, she was about to found her house with revenues, that the religious might be free from all anxiety about their temporal affairs, "not thinking," she says, "of the many anxieties which the possession of property brings in its train."

The Saint saw that poverty was the safe course, but feared that she could not obtain the assent of others to the adoption of so severe a way of life, that they would charge her with folly, and tell her that she must not be the cause of suffering to others. She had now for some time wished, if it were possible in her state, to go about a beggar for the love of God, to have no house of her own, nor anything else.

She consulted the spiritual men of her acquaintance, as she did in everything, but hardly any one approved. They had such good reasons for their opinion that Teresa was willing to give up her own, and admit they were in the right. But when "I returned to my prayer," she writes, "and saw our Lord on the Cross, so poor and destitute, I could not bear to be rich, and I implored Him with tears so to order matters that I might be poor as He was."

She wrote to her Dominican friend, Father Pedro Ibáñez, who "sent back two sheets by way of reply," she says, "full of objections and theology against my plan, telling me that he had thought much on the subject. I answered that in order to escape from my vocation, the vow of poverty I had made, and the perfect observance of the counsels of Christ, I did not want any theology to help me, and in this case I should not thank him for his learning."

St. Peter of Alcantara at her request came to the house of Doña Luisa. He knew the worth of poverty, and charged the Saint on no account to give way, and then our Lord Himself told her that the monastery must be founded in poverty; that it was His will and the will of His Father, that every one who served Him would never be in want of the necessities of life. Father Ibáñez came round to her

views at last. "Now," says the Saint, "I was in the greatest joy at hearing this: and having these opinions in my favor it seemed to me nothing less than the possession of all the wealth of the world when I had resolved to live in poverty for the love of God."

When she had been about six months in Toledo the Provincial sent word that she might return to her monastery, but if she wished to remain she might stay. This was the time of the elections, and she was told that many of the nuns meant to elect her prioress: "though willing to suffer any kind of martyrdom for God, I could not persuade myself at all to accept this, and so I gave thanks to God I was not then in the convent, wrote to my friends and begged them not to vote for me."

Glad to be free she would remain: but our Lord told her she must return to Avila, and that, as she longed for a cross, there was a cross prepared for her, and a heavy one. She began to cry, thinking that the office of prioress was her cross, and went to her confessor, who bade her go, for that was the more perfect course. Doña Luisa was very sorry, but acquiesced on being told that the parting was for the service of God. The Saint was distressed, and at the same time in great peace and joy because she was going to suffer. "Our Lord had told me," are her words, "that I was going to carry a heavy cross—though I never thought it would be so heavy as I afterwards found it to be—and yet I went forth rejoicing." Her absence from Avila was of service to her work, and her return at this time was necessary, for on the night of her arrival the brief sought for in Rome was delivered to Doña Guiomar. St. Peter of Alcantara had also come and was staying in the house of Don Francis de Salcedo, but only for about eight days. He helped the Saint in all her labors, and now went with Don Francis to the bishop to do her another and greater service. He and Don Francis persuaded him to accept the monastery, though founded in poverty and a poor house,

for it was very small. "Truly this is the house of St. Joseph," said St. Peter of Alcantara, when he saw it "for it is the little hospital of Bethlehem."

"Everything was done," says the Saint, "in the utmost secrecy; and if it had not been so, I do not see how anything could have been done at all: for the people of the city were against us, as it appeared afterwards. Our Lord ordained that one of my brothers-in-law should be ill, and his wife away, and himself in such straits that my superiors gave me leave to remain with him." This illness of Don Juan de Ovalle enabled her to make all the arrangements necessary without exciting suspicion. "It was very wonderful, for his illness lasted no longer than was necessary for our affair: and when it was necessary he should recover his health, that I might be disengaged and he leave the house empty, our Lord restored him: and he was astonished at it himself," for when he saw everything ready for the coming in of the religious, and his illness gone, he said to the Saint: "It is not necessary I should be ill any longer." He knew then why he had been ill.

Then on the feast of St. Bartholomew, August 24, 1562, the Saint, being forty-seven years of age, and in the twenty-ninth year of her religious life, accompanied by two nuns of the Incarnation who also were outside their monastery at the time, but with the leave of the Provincial, took possession of the house of St. Joseph, the building of which had cost her so much labor and reproach, and founded the Carmel of the Barefooted. She gave the habit, assisted by the two nuns, to four religious. Those were Antonio de Henao, a penitent of St. Peter of Alcantara, whom he had prepared and reserved for the new foundation. She was henceforth known as Antonia of the Holy Ghost. The second was Maria de la Paz, whom Doña Guiomar de Ulloa had brought up and kept for the house. The third was Ursola de los Santos. She retained her name, as Ursola of the Saints. She had been prepared for this by Gaspar

Daza, the priest whom St. Teresa had consulted in the beginning of her troubles. The fourth was Maria de Avila, sister of Julian, the priest of that name, who remained faithful to the Saint in all her trials. She was called Mary of St. Joseph.

These were all received without a dowry; four poor orphans, as the Saint called them, but very rich in grace, four corner stones of the new Order of Carmel; older also as Barefooted Carmelites than the Saint herself the foundress; for she was even now a nun of the Incarnation living under the Mitigated Rule, under the Provincial, and could not remain in the house of St. Joseph, any more than the two nuns who were with her; these were her cousins. Doña Inez and Doña Ana de Tapia. Gaspar Daza said Mass, at which were present Don Gonzalo de Aranda, Don Francis de Salcedo, Julian de Avila, her brother-in-law, Don Juan de Ovalle, and his wife, her sister, Doña Juan de Ahumada. The bell of the chapel weighed less than three pounds, and remained there for a hundred years. It was then transferred by order of the General to the monastery of Pastrana, and there the members of the general chapter assembled at the sound of the bell which was rung for the first Mass of the barefooted nuns of Carmel.

Saint Teresa was in the house lawfully, with the leave of her superiors, and "I did nothing," she says, "without the advice of learned men, in order that I might not break in a single point my vow of obedience. If they had told me there was the slightest imperfection in the matter I would have given up the founding of a thousand monasteries; how much more then this one?"

"I felt," says the Saint, "as if I was in bliss." She had obeyed her confessors in all things, and had done that which our Lord enjoined her: and for three or four hours was in great peace and joy. Then Satan began to torment her with scruples about obedience; with doubts about the perseverance of the religious in so austere a life, and even

her own ability to live with them. Her distress became so great that she could think of nothing else, and her soul was plunged into darkness. "When I found myself in this state," she says, "I went and placed myself before the most Holy Sacrament, though I could not pray to Him; so great was my anguish that I was like one in the agony of death. I could not make the matter known to any one, because no confessor had as yet been appointed."

In this distress she promised our Lord to do all in her power to enter St. Joseph's, and if it could be done with a good conscience, to make a vow of enclosure. "When I had done this," she writes, "the devil fled in a moment and left me calm and peaceful; and I have continued so ever since. The enclosure, penance, and other rules of this house are to me, in their observance, so singularly sweet and light, the joy I have is so exceedingly great, that I am now and then thinking what on earth I could have chosen which should be more delightful."

This fight with Satan fatigued her greatly, and she wished to rest a little after dinner, but there was no rest for her today. The nuns of the Incarnation had heard of her doings, and the Prioress sent for her. She went, leaving the four religious in great distress. She felt that there was more trouble for her, being persuaded that she would be put in prison. The thought of that, however, consoled her, because she longed to be alone, and in the prison of the monastery she would have solitude enough.

Teresa told everything to the Prioress, who was softened a little, but the Provincial must be told also. When he arrived at the monastery the Saint appeared before him to answer for her deeds. "I confessed my faults," she says, "as if I had been very much to blame; and so I seemed to every one who did not know all the reasons. After the Provincial had rebuked me sharply, though not with the severity my fault deserved, nor according to the representations made to him, I would not defend myself, for I was

determined to bear it all: on the contrary, I prayed him to forgive and punish, and be no longer angry with me."

The Provincial ordered her to explain her conduct before the Community, and she obeyed. She spoke so well that neither the Provincial nor the nuns condemned her; and later on she spoke to the Provincial alone, who was so satisfied that he promised to let her go back to St. Joseph's as soon as the city was calm again.

The town council and even the Canons of the Cathedral were disturbed. They held a solemn meeting to which the heads of the religious were invited, and resolved that the new monastery must be broken up. Father Bañes, the Dominican, alone defended it, though even he objected to the vow of poverty as understood by the Saint, whom at that time he did not know, having never seen her. He told them that the matter did not concern them, and that it belonged to the Bishop. The town council was obstinate, and would have no monastery founded in poverty within its territory; and so the next day the mayor went to St. Joseph's to expel the four nuns. Refused admittance, he threatened to have the door broken. The nuns replied that they were under the jurisdiction of the bishop and not under his. He now came to his senses and retired, but was none the less bent on the destruction of the monastery. The town council then brought an action against the nuns, and St. Teresa, having no money, had to defend them. Her friends, however, stood forth in her defense, but no lawyers in Avila would undertake their cause, so they had to defend her as well as they could themselves, and the priest Julian of Avila in person served the writs. Don Gonzalo de Aranda went to Madrid to plead; but before the trial began the zeal of the town council cooled, and the lawsuit was abandoned. Then in Mid-Lent, 1563, the Saint was allowed to return to her children among whom she meant to live as a nun under obedience, but the community appealed to the Bishop and the Provincial, and obtained from them

the appointment of St. Teresa as prioress. She now changed her name, and Doña Teresa Sanchez Cepeda Davila y Ahumada was henceforth Teresa of Jesus, mother of the reform of Carmel.

The Saint had now a rest of five years, and these years, she says, were the most tranquil years of her life. The vow she had made in 1560 always to do that which is the more perfect was commuted; for her confessor judged it to be an occasion of scruples both to herself and to those who had the direction of her life. The Provincial authorized Fra Garcia of Toledo to release her from that vow, and to leave her free to renew it in another form with certain conditions essential to its validity, by the observance of which there could be no room for scruples. This was done. She was also free from all trouble of a secular kind, for though she possessed nothing she and her religious were rarely in want, though whenever that happened to them they rejoiced in it. The Saint, however, was not without her cross: she was always doubtful about the state of her soul and very much afraid of delusions. She consulted the ablest and most spiritual priests she could find; on one occasion she made known her state to an inquisitor, and all assured her there was nothing to be afraid of. It then came into her head that spiritual men might be deceived as well as herself, so for her own greater security she told her confessor to consult "certain learned men, though they were not much given up to prayer;" her desire was to be in the right way, and safe on the doctrine of the Church.

Early in 1567 the General of the Order came to Avila, and visited the Saint. She told him everything, giving him also a full account of her whole life. Her story distressed the General, for he had lost her through the weakness of the Provincial, she being no longer subject to him in the Order, but to the Bishop of Avila. The General asked for the briefs by which the Saint was allowed to build her monastery and to become subject to the Bishop. These

were shown; the proceedings had been irregular; the Saint when told that she was no longer under the jurisdiction of the General was distressed. The General, with her own wish and consent, readmitted her, and, moreover, gave her leave to found other monasteries, all of which, however, were to be subject not to the bishops, but to the Order. He also allowed her to remain in the new monastery, and forbade any of her superiors to send her back to the monastery she had left.

When the Saint began to found another monastery she recognized the need of friars who would help the sisters; and there were no friars of her reform. The Bishop of Avila, too, saw that need, and asked the General to establish houses of men wherein the primitive rule should be observed. Others also made the same request, and the General himself wished it could be done, but the friars opposed him, and he, therefore, for the sake of peace and the quiet of the Order, declined, at least for a time, to sanction the observance of the primitive rule.

St. Teresa herself wrote to him very earnestly, and obtained leave to found two monasteries of men in which the primitive rule in all its strictness should be kept, as in the new house of St. Joseph. She was glad to get the permission, but her troubles were only begun. She did not know one friar in the whole province who would accept the rule, nor any secular person who would enter the Order under these conditions. Nevertheless, she had no doubt that our Lord would find the friars, and so she went to Mediña del Campo, where, on the feast of the Assumption, she founded her second monastery of nuns, that of St. Joseph being the first.

She laid the foundation of that house in greater poverty than the poverty of St. Joseph's in Avila. The house hired for her was in so ruinous a state that in a very few days after taking possession she was forced to remove with her sisters to another, which was lent her till her own house

could be made habitable. In all these troubles she was calm and joyous, rejoicing that she had to suffer, but at the same time effectually hiding from the other nuns all her own distress that they might not be discouraged and faint. She had gone to *Mediña del Campo* without the approbation of her prudent friends. Some said she was mad; and even the Bishop who thought so highly of her regarded the affair as folly, though he was too generous to say so to her. She had, however, the help and encouragement of her confessors—Father Baltasar Alvarez, at that time rector of the house of the Society in *Mediña*, and Father Bañes, her constant friend.

In *Mediña del Campo* she began to search for those who would begin the reform of Carmel, for she longed exceedingly to have friars under the primitive rule. She discussed the matter, but very secretly, with Fra Antonio de Heredia, the Prior of the Carmelites there. The Prior heard her with joy, and promised to be himself the first friar of the reform. She thought he was jesting, for he was nearly sixty years old, unused as austerities, and of a delicate constitution. He was a very good religious, recollected, fond of his cell, and learned; but the Saint did not think he could live as a Carmelite under the primitive rule.

Antonio, however, insisted upon it, and he assured her that he had a vocation. She accepted him on the condition that he would begin at once to order his life—he being Prior of Medina—according to the primitive rule. He submitted, and suffered greatly at the hands of his brethren, who regarded his conduct as akin to folly.

But she made a greater gain than this of Fra Antonio; she persuaded St. John of the Cross to abandon his purpose of leaving the Order of Carmel for the Carthusians. About a year later St. Teresa saw the beginning of the reform of the friars in a most poor house which she obtained for them in *Duruelo*.

The last house founded by the Saint was that of Burgos, in April, 1582. She was very ill, and with difficulty reached Valladolid about the end of July, where she was grossly insulted by a lawyer who would have her violate the provisions of her brother's will. Because she was just the lawyer called her a wicked nun, who was less good than many who lived in the world. The Saint accepted the reproach merely saying, "Our Lord reward you for your charity," as if she deserved to be thus treated.

The Prioress of Valladolid turned against and sent her away from the monastery, and on September 16th the Saint reached Mediña del Campo, where also the Prioress treated her with the utmost disrespect. She then went to Alba de Tormes and nearly died on the road for want of food. She came to Alba on the evening of the 20th; the next morning she went with the utmost difficulty down to the church for Communion, and then returned to her cell and her bed never again to leave them. Fra Antonio of Jesus, the first who promised to accept her reform, administered the last Sacraments. Unable to speak, she turned towards her faithful companion, the Venerable Anne of St. Bartholmew, and drew her towards her, and then crept into her arms: Anne held her there for fourteen hours, and then, seeing our Lord with many saints at the foot of the bed, she prayed for her death that she might enter into joy; the instant she had finished her prayer the Saint was dead. It was on the feast of St. Francis, October 4, 1582.

The greatness of St. Teresa's work may be guessed from this, that on the day of her death there were fifteen monasteries of friars and seventeen of women—the fruits of her sanctity and her legacy to the Church of which she was always the humblest and most docile child.

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